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ITEM 4(b):* ISSUES ARISING FROM THE RESOLUTIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

ADDITIONAL PROPOSED FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS TO UNCED-RELATED RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Note by the Executive Director

Summary

The present note deals with three subjects emanating from UNCED, namely the global conference on the sustainable development of small island developing States, the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification and the convening of an intergovernmental meeting on the protection of the marine environment from land-based activities. The Executive Director reports on how UNEP proposes to follow up on each of these subjects.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to take note of the Executive Director's note and endorse the actions proposed therein.

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* Refers to the number of the item on the Provisional Agenda (UNEP/GC.17/1).

ADDITIONAL PROPOSED FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS TO UNCED-RELATED RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

1. The efforts and plans of UNEP to follow up on and assist in the implementation of Agenda 21 are detailed in a number of documents before the Council at its seventeenth session, principally in the Proposed Programme of Fund Activities for 1994-1995 (UNEP/GC.17/7) and in the Council's draft plans to implement Agenda 21 (UNEP/GC.17/27).

2. There are, however, three major additional subjects emanating from UNCED in which UNEP is involved to a greater or lesser extent, namely: (i) preparations for a global conference on the sustainable development of small island developing States; (ii) elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification; and (iii) an intergovernmental meeting on protection of the marine environment from land-based activities.

Global conference on sustainable development of small island developing States

3. The General Assembly, following up on proposals in Agenda 21, on 22 December 1992 adopted resolution 47/189 calling for the convening in Barbados in April 1994 of a global conference on the sustainable development of small island developing States. The conference is being organized by the Secretary-General and a preparatory committee. Over the years, UNEP has sponsored the development of regional seas conventions and regional environmental action plans covering most of the small island developing States, and conventions and action plans have catalysed significant inter-island cooperation. The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the Caribbean Environment Programme and the Eastern African Action Plan are heavily involved in various aspects of sustainable island development for their respective regions.

4. UNEP is prepared to cooperate fully in the preparations for the conference and will make available to the conference secretariat the experience it has gained in this field. As this activity was not anticipated in the 1992-1993 programme, and as the General Assembly did not make provision for all the necessary expenses, UNEP is prepared to provide support from the Fund Programme Reserve in 1993 to: make available to the conference organizers its extensive experience and information on island environments; encourage the Regional Seas Programmes for the Caribbean and the South Pacific, and the small island States in the Regional Seas Programmes for Eastern Africa, West Africa and South Asia to become actively involved in the regional technical meetings to prepare substantive contributions to the conference; and cooperate in any other way possible in the organization of the global conference. It is hoped that the conference results will be fully integrated with existing international agreements, ongoing programmes and regional organizations to ensure the effective implementation of conference decisions.

International convention to combat desertification

5. At the invitation of UNCED, the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session adopted resolution 47/188 of 22 December 1992, establishing an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa.

6. UNEP is, naturally, keenly interested in the subject of desertification, the Governing Council of UNEP having served as the preparatory committee for, and the UNEP Executive Director as Secretary-General of, the United Nations Conference on Desertification, held at Nairobi in 1977. The Conference adopted a Plan of Action to Combat Desertification and UNEP (the Governing Council and the Executive Director) was subsequently entrusted by the General Assembly in its resolution 32/172 (para. 8) of 19 December 1977 "with the responsibility of following up and coordinating the implementation of the Plan of Action."

7. Consequently, following the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 47/188 (cited above), the Executive Director and the head of UNEP's Desertification Control Programme Activity Centre held discussions with the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) and the head of the ad hoc secretariat for the Convention and promised UNEP's full support for the work of the INC and its ad hoc secretariat. In particular, the Executive Director pledged to put at the disposal of the conference secretariat all the information and data UNEP had compiled over the past 15 years about desertification, in particular the detailed and comprehensive report prepared by UNEP at a cost of over $1 million and submitted to UNCED through the fourth meeting of the UNCED Preparatory Committee.

Intergovernmental meeting on protection of the marine environment from land-based activities

8. In Chapter 17(26) of Agenda 21, the UNEP Governing Council was "invited to convene, as soon as possible, an intergovernmental meeting on protection of the marine environment from land-based activities". The Executive Director's proposed workplan, timetable and budget in response to this request are contained in a separate document to the Council (UNEP/GC.17/5/Add.3).